

# Mexican ruling class rallies behind President Sheinbaum after Trump delays tariffs

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Following a call with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum on Thursday, US President Donald Trump delayed until April 2 tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada that fall under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), encompassing virtually all trade between the North American countries.

Sheinbaum, who is being elevated as a new patron saint by business groups and even opposition parties, held a mass nationalist rally in Mexico City's Zócalo Plaza Sunday with live music to celebrate the deal and promote "national unity." She had postponed any announcement on retaliatory measures, which have now been canceled.

Even Claudio X González Laporte, the most notorious sponsor of the right-wing opposition, declared Sheinbaum "did really well."

Meanwhile, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also responded by delaying retaliatory tariffs.

While the delay was effusively applauded in Mexico's corporate media, Trump said he plans to continue his trade war against the world, which will inevitably impact both of Washington's neighbors and main trade partners disproportionately.

A stock market sell-off on Wall Street triggered by the US-led trade war since mid-February continued Thursday after the announcement of the deal with Sheinbaum. It only partially slowed Friday, with the financial press pointing to an overwhelming sense of uncertainty.

Twenty-five percent tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum are still scheduled to take effect on March 12, with Canada and Mexico accounting for the highest share of exports of these metals to the United States.

On April 2, as announced by Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, the US plans to impose a regime of reciprocal tariffs against all US trading partners

globally.

The Trump administration initially imposed devastating 25 percent tariffs against Mexico and Canada on Tuesday, demanding stronger action against migrants and drug trafficking.

Tariffs doubled that day on all imports from China to 20 percent will be maintained. Trump has also accused China of sharing responsibility for the entry into the US of fentanyl, which has caused tens of thousands of deaths from overdoses.

Lutnick said market reaction was not guiding policy, and Trump told reporters that he would suspend tariffs out of respect for Sheinbaum, whom he described as a "wonderful woman."

However, Trump decided a day earlier to suspend tariffs affecting automakers, following corporate pressure and warnings of a shutdown of the highly integrated supply chains within days. Between 65 and 75 percent of the components of cars under the USMCA have to be manufactured within the region.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta had lowered its forecast for the American economy from a 1.5 percent contraction to a 2.8 percent contraction in the first quarter.

Sheinbaum explained after her call that "everything had an influence" on Trump's decision, including corporate pressures, the stock market and the "good relationship" that Trump had developed with Sheinbaum's predecessor and mentor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known as AMLO. "It was always a very respectful relationship," she said.

Sheinbaum's approval rating has risen above 80 percent amid a wave of widespread corporate media commentary, usually critical of the ruling Morena party, presenting her as a "commander" defending Mexican sovereignty.

However, far from a relationship of “respect,” since López Obrador responded to threats of tariffs by the first Trump White House, agreeing in June 2019 to deploy thousands of National Guard troops to crack down on migrant caravans, the nominally “left” and “nationalist” Morena government has maintained a level of subservience to US imperialism not seen since the days of the puppet dictator Porfirio Díaz at the beginning of the 20th century.

Even as Trump called Mexicans “rapists” and “murderers,” Morena has conceded on every major issue to Washington’s bullying. This has included the detention and terrorizing of hundreds of thousands of migrants by the Mexican military, the participation of Mexican troops in US war games and military exercises in preparation for war against China and the implementation of economic sanctions against China.

While the details of the agreement reached Thursday are still to emerge, Sheinbaum said she outlined recent advances on combating the fentanyl trade, leading to a reduction in drug seizures at US borders.

“I told him, ‘We are getting results President Trump, because now that he put the tariffs, how are we going to continue collaborating, cooperating with something that harms the people of Mexico?’ It was not a threat,” Sheinbaum explained.

Sheinbaum had already agreed to accept non-Mexican deportees and manage much of the deportation logistics, including pressuring other countries to accept deportees. On Thursday, she defended “progress” in the detention of migrants before they arrive on the US-Mexico border.

After each concession, López Obrador and now Sheinbaum have sought to cover up their subservience by claiming that Washington is taking seriously Mexico’s demand to halt the flooding of Mexico with US firearms that end up in the hands of the drug cartels. Whatever limited measures taken by US authorities have not stopped record killings and violence related to cartels in Mexico.

Far from defending “the people of Mexico,” Morena represents the transnational corporations and their Mexican capitalist clients above all. The clearest demonstration was the decision by López Obrador to reopen factories in April 2020, sacrificing unnecessarily hundreds of thousands to COVID-19 even before vaccines were available.

Similarly today, Sheinbaum is guided by the imperative of assuring investors that her administration can be counted on to provide “secure supply chains” regardless of the cost imposed upon workers, migrant and native alike.

The Morena government is dedicated to securing the interests of Mexican billionaires and multimillionaires, who are entirely dependent on their ties to Wall Street and more than doubled their wealth under López Obrador. It provides no objective means to protect whatever “sovereignty” and democratic and social rights are left in Mexico before Trump’s drive to subordinate North America and the entire hemisphere to war against China.

Sheinbaum has practically grown quiet about Trump’s threats to invade Mexico, ostensibly to combat the drug cartels. However, Mexican and American workers cannot discard these threats. Concluding that the economic disruption from tariffs is too great, the fascistic Trump administration may conclude that waging military operations in Mexico is the least bad option for pursuing its neocolonial objectives.



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